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DSSD CENSUS 2000 PROCEDURES AND OPERATIONS MEMORANDUM SERIES
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MEMORANDUM FOR Michael Longini
Chief, Decennial Systems and Contracts Management Office

From: Howard Hogan *Howard Hogan*
Chief, Decennial Statistical Studies Division

Prepared By: C. Robert Dimitri *CRD*
Decennial Statistical Studies Division

Subject: Observation of Undeliverable as Addressed Advance Notice Letter
Sampling and General Procedures at the National Processing
Center in Jeffersonville, IN, on March 16-20, 2000

I. Introduction

My trip was planned for March 20 through 22, and its original purpose was twofold. First, I was to witness general sorter and check-in procedures for mailback questionnaires successfully returned to the National Processing Center. This operation was of particular interest to me because of my evaluations of Census 2000 mail response and return rates. Second, I was to observe the check-in of Undeliverable as Addressed (UAA) questionnaires and the sampling procedure for those questionnaires. (The sample's purpose is to learn more about reasons for undeliverability of Census 2000 questionnaires.) This operation was of interest to me because of my evaluation of Census 2000 UAA rates and the fact that members of my staff dictated the sampling procedure for the UAA questionnaires and will study the sampled UAA questionnaires.

However, my plans were forced to evolve. An UAA advance notice letter sampling procedure had been organized by the Decennial Statistical Studies Division (DSSD) staff, and resources for performing this operation were limited. In anticipation of a possible heavy workload of UAA advance notice letters on Thursday the 16th through Saturday the 18th, my trip was lengthened so that I could assist in the UAA advance notice letter sampling procedure, verify that the operation was running smoothly, and acquire firsthand knowledge of how it was implemented in order to provide future aid for evaluations of the sample.

Once I was at the NPC, my trip was cut short when I was called back to headquarters on Monday the 20th. As a result of my being called back, I was unable to observe the sampling of UAA questionnaires.

II. Observations and Comments

A. UAA Advance Notice Letter Sampling

Fresh off the plane from Washington, D.C., on Thursday morning, I was put to work immediately upon my arrival at the NPC. Martha Sutt of DSSD was coordinating the sampling of the UAA advance notice letters. She let me borrow a pair of work gloves and taught me the procedure which was being used to sample the UAA advance notice letters. This procedure included tracking the number of bins, which came in two sizes. This count would provide an estimate of the total universe size. One UAA advance notice letter was sampled from each small bin, and two were sampled from each large bin. These were set aside so that the identification number data for the sample could later be stored in files. Those performing the sampling were to try to make their choices as random as possible, which meant varying the position(s) in the bins from which UAA advance notice letters were selected.

The manual labor proved to be an interesting change of pace from the usual rigors of cubicle existence. Lifting bins and moving carts provided a decent workout. Even with the protective gloves, the tips of my fingers were rather sore from the work, though. I was told that attempting to sample without the gloves is a quick way to tear up one's fingers.

There were occasional glitches in the UAA advance notice letter sampling, such as bins of forms that were not UAA advance notice letters being mixed in with the UAA advance notice letter bins. These were promptly identified and channeled to the appropriate locations.

No more than four people at any one time were working on the project, and the UAA advance notice letters were housed in two separate buildings. I assisted in the sampling operation on Thursday and Friday. I was told that it was not necessary for me to return on Saturday because there was not a backlog of forms that needed immediate clearing.

B. UAA Questionnaire Sampling

On Friday afternoon before I left I contacted the person who I was told would be overseeing the UAA questionnaire sampling operation. There were UAA questionnaires available for the operation at that time, but she told me that the operation would not begin until Monday or Tuesday. Consequently, I did not gain any firsthand insight into the procedure. Still, I feel that my experience with the UAA advance notice letters gave me a good idea of what takes place with regard to storing, transporting, and sampling any large amount of items within the NPC.

C. General Tour

On Monday morning before my flight I took part in a general tour of the NPC facilities. Not only did we see the treatment of census questionnaires from beginning to end, but I also caught glimpses of other operations performed at the NPC such as Telephone Questionnaire Assistance (TQA), nonresponse followup (NRFU) enumerator kit preparation, and numerous non-decennial processes.

III. Conclusions

For the most part, everything that I witnessed at the NPC seemed to be running rather smoothly. My only suggestion would be for sampling operations that employees be provided with quality working gloves. Martha Sutt was kind enough to lend me her "good pair", and I am certain my experience would not have been nearly as positive had I not had them.

cc: DSSD Census 2000 Procedures Operations Memorandum Series List
M. Sutt (DSSD)
J. Chesnut
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